

Francis Bacon: A Strong Motive for his Charge of Bribery

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“Those that want friends to open themselves unto are cannibals of their own hearts.”

—Francis Bacon, *Essay: Of Friendship*



Sir Francis Bacon
(1561–1626)

The author had once read somewhere, and mostly probably the source will come up in the near future again, that Sir Francis Bacon was a gambler as was Raleigh and Marlowe. Upon this hint began an investigation on Bacon's impeachment; found, within the judicature of Parliament, 1621 the following:

The person, the Lord Chancellor [Bacon]. The matter, corruption: the parties accusing, Aubrey and Egerton. That the complaints of Aubrey and Egerton against the Lord Chancellor and the Bishop [of Llandaff] for corruption, for the £100 and £400 and the recognizance, shall be presented to the Lords from this House, without prejudice or opinion.¹

It was a surprise to read that not only Francis Bacon was charged at the time, but also a Bishop. Who was Bishop of Llandaff being charged with the Lord Chancellor for 'corruption'? The investigation of this person took to when an Archbishop Laud was consecrated to the See of St. David on November 18, 1621 by a Theophilus Field, Bishop of Llandaff. It was obvious that the Bishop mentioned in Aubrey and Egerton's charges was this Theophilus Field, Bishop of Llandaff in 1621.

In the *National Dictionary of Bishops*, Field is given as being born in 1574 and was the brother of Nathaniel Field, the actor. This is peculiar, that his brother was in the acting business and it may be a path to dwell upon for Baconians who wish to prove that Bacon wrote the Shakespeare Plays. Probably Field's brother could have offered stage directions to its adequateness to Francis Bacon in order to write the Shakespeare Plays. There is no evidence for this, only an assumption of the author on the above fact, yet a very strong assumption one must admit and well to be observed for those Authorship hunters.



From Baxter's *The Greatest of Literary Problems* (1915)

¹ Prothero's *Select Statutes and other Constitutional Documents*, 1906

King James (1566–1625) appointed Theophilus Field one of his Chaplains, and he acted in the same capacity to Francis Bacon when Lord Chancellor. This information comes from the Calendar State Papers,² and is another peculiarity to see that James and Bacon's Chaplain should be charged with bribery in 1621.

Peculiarity number three is that John Chamberlain in a letter to Carleton, written June 2, 1619 describes Theophilus Field as 'a sort of broker' for Francis Bacon the Chancellor in his peculations. This fact was double checked being very important to the element of information to turn into motive; it is also stated in the Calendar State Papers.³

We have now established fact from fiction:

1. Theophilus Field was a stock broker to Francis Bacon when Bacon was Chancellor in 1619.
2. Theophilus Field was Bacon's Chaplain
3. Theophilus Field was King James' Chaplain; and would it be too presumptuous to presume he was also James' stock broker? Or to be lenient to suppositions, at least James knew of this?



**George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham
(1592-1628)**

By the interest of Buckingham, James' favourite, Theophilus Field was consecrated Bishop of Llandaff on October 10, 1619.⁴ Field being dissatisfied with the smallness of the revenue, pestered Buckingham with letters urging his poverty, having a wife and six children to maintain, and vowing 'to spend his blood for him' if he would get him a better Bishopric, such as Hereford. This fact can be found in Willis' *Survey of Cathedrals*.⁵ Here

² Dom 1619–23, P. 238

³ Dom 1619–23, P. 260

⁴ Le Neve Fasti, ed. Hardy, II., P. 253

⁵ Vol. II., PP. 526, 527

we have an open bribe to Buckingham from Theophilus Field, which plainly states, if Buckingham gave him a better position (and we are talking of the year 1619) then Field will 'spend his blood for him'. An open bribe if there ever was one from a Bishop and from a King's Chaplain.

We now come to the year of concern, 1621. Field indeed was impeached by the Commons for brocage and bribery before his promotion, on accusation of one Edward Egerton. Field's defence as regards the charge of bribery was deemed satisfactory by the Lords, since

'It was not a fitting thing for a clergyman to be concerned in a brocage of such a nature, the house, required the Archbishop of Canterbury to give him an admonition as Dr. Field, not as Bishop of Llandaff, in the Convocation house, which was done accordingly.'⁶

Despite this check, Field still persevered in his suit to Buckingham, and as the result of a letter written in August 1627, he was translated to the See of St. David's in the following September.⁷ Though Field's income was quadrupled, he found the air of his new diocese to disagree with him. When asked by King James why he lingered on at Broad Sanctuary in Westminster, he gave as the reasons

'want of health and means of recovery in that desolate place, his diocese, where there is not so much as a leech to cure a sick horse';⁸ and that 'Cathedral should be whitewashed'.⁹

On December 15, 1635 Field reached the summit of his ambitions by being elected Bishop of Hereford.¹⁰ He died on June 2, 1636 and was buried at the east end of the north aisle in Hereford Cathedral. Says Wood:¹¹

'He wrote A Christian Preparation to the Lord's Supper, 8vo in 1624, besides several sermons and other things.'

Field contributed to and apparently edited 'An Italian's Dead Bodie Stuckl with English Flowers Elegies on the Death of Sir Oratio Pallavincino' London (1600). Poor commendatory verses by him are prefixed to Sir John Stradling's *Divine Poems*, 1625.¹²

A very strong motive for bringing Francis Bacon's false charges to highlight are the above facts, and not only. Should King James have made Bacon use Theophilus Field to manipulate some land, that either belonged to Edward Egerton, one of the accusers of Field in 1621, or with Egerton's knowledge, will never be known for sure. But if this is the case, the sequel is as follows:

Stock plunged and brought bankruptcy to the landowners. Whether this stock was being played upon through the years and for how many, it is hard to tell. James was not to be seen being the chief contriver of this stock

⁶ *The History of England*, Vol IV., PP. 77, 78

⁷ Le Neve, Vol. I., PP. 302, 331

⁸ Calendar State Papers: Letter to Endymion Porter dated October 31, 1629

⁹ Jones & Freeman. *History of St. David's*, P. 171

¹⁰ Le Neve, Vol. I., P. 471

¹¹ *Fasto*, Vol. I., PP. 288, 289

¹² Wood. *Athenæ Oxon.* Vol. II., P. 397

brocage scheme and it is believed, that Francis Bacon would have screened King James from the eyes of Edward Egerton who only saw Bacon and Field. It is a probability, that the other accuser, Aubrey, was also involved in this stock brocage scheme.

When this stock or probably many stocks began to plunge, Aubrey and Egerton wanted payback; they were being harassed by other landowners who wanted their money back. Who did they know who was handling the stock? Of course the answer is Field, the stock broker. Field was not going to take this on his shoulders and plunder into obliteration. We see his style of character still persevered in his suit to Buckingham when the charges were reported. What does he do? He implicates Francis Bacon who definitely, by the above facts, knew what Field was doing in the stock market of this Jacobean Era.

Francis Bacon goes to James. What does James do? He asks, at their 'secret interview' that is on record, for Bacon to take the blame; being a King this would ruin him forever should he be implicated. There were enough scandals against him: the Gunpowder Plot; the Gowrie mystery; Prince Henry's death and alleged poisoning; the Overbury poisoning.

That an interview between the King and Bacon took place is clear from the following entry in the *Journals of the House of Lords* of April 17:

The Lord Treasurer signified, that in the interim of this cessation, the Lord Chancellor was an humble suitor unto his Majesty, that he might see his Majesty and speak with him; and although his Majesty, in respect of the Lord Chancellor person, and of the place he holds, might have given his Lordship that favour, yet, for that his Lordship is under the trial of this House, his Majesty would not on the sudden grant it.

That on Sunday last, the King calling all the Lords of this House which were of his Council before him, it pleased his Majesty to show their Lordships what was desired by the Lord Chancellor, demanding their Lordships advice therein. The Lords did not presume to advise his Majesty; for that his Majesty did suddenly propound such a course as all the world could not advise a better; which was that his Majesty would speak with him privately.

That yesterday, his Majesty admitting the Lord Chancellor to his presence, his Lordship desired that he might have a particular of those matters wherewith he is charged before the Lords of this House; for that it was not possible for him, who passed so many orders and decrees in a year, to remember all things that fell out in them; and that, this being granted, his Lordship would desire two requests of his Majesty. That, where his answers should be fair and clear, to those things objected against him, his Lordship might stand upon his innocency; and two, where his answer should not be so fair and clear, there his Lordship might be admitted to the extenuation of the charge; and where the proofs were full and undeniable, his Lordship would ingenuously confess them, and put himself upon the mercy of the Lords. Unto all which his Majesty's answer was, he referred him to the Lords of this House, and therefore his Majesty willed his Lordship to make report to their Lordships. It was thereupon ordered, that the Lord Treasurer should signify unto his Majesty, that the Lords do thankfully acknowledge his Majesty's favour, and hold themselves highly bound unto his Majesty for the same.

At this interview, the King, who had determined to sacrifice the Oracle of his Counsel rather than the favourite of his affection, rather than the King's purse, gave Bacon his advice, as it was termed, that he should submit himself to the House of Peers, and that upon his Princely word he would then restore him again, if they in their honours should not be sensible of his merits. How little this command accorded with the Chancellor's intention to defend him, may be gathered from his distress and passionate remonstrance.

'I see my approaching ruin: there is no hope of mercy in a multitude, if I do not plead for myself, when my enemies are to give fire. Those who strike at your Chancellor will strike at your Crown.'

All remonstrance proving fruitless, he took leave of the King with these memorable words:

'I am the first; I wish I may be the last sacrifice.'

On April 17, 1621 the House met when some account of the King's interview with the Chancellor was narrated by the Lord Treasurer, and ordered to be entered upon the *Journals of the House*; and, a rumour having been circulated that Buckingham had sent his brother abroad to escape inquiry, he protested unto the Lords, that whereas the opinion of the world is, that his Lordship had sent his brother, Sir Edward Villiers, abroad in the King's service, of purpose to avoid his trial touching some grievances complained of by the Commons, his Lordship was so far from that, that his Lordship did hasten his coming home; and, if anything blameworthy can be objected against him, his Lordship is as ready to censure him as he was Mompesson.

Bacon's love of familiar illustration is to be found in various parts of the history: as when speaking of the commotion by the Cornish men, on behalf of the impostor Perkin Warbeck: "The King judged it his best and surest way to keep his strength together in the seat and centre of his Kingdom; according to the ancient Indian emblem, in such a swelling season, to hold the hand upon the middle of the bladder, that no side might rise." (Montagu).¹³

Francis Bacon died in the arms of Sir Julius Caesar, and of his funeral no account can be found, nor is there any trace of the site of the house where he died; yet Lovejoy states:

'A few friends, faithful among the faithless, enthusiastic young disciples, among whom was Hobbes, the then budding philosopher of Malmesbury, Sir Thomas Meautys, his devoted Chaplain, Rawley, and servants whom adversity could not alienate, composed the [funeral] train which followed fallen greatness to its last resting-place.'

It has been said that Bacon was buried in the same grave with his mother, in St. Michael's church,¹⁴ however, today's St Albanians differ: on a research visit of the summer of 2008, the supervisors of St. Michael's affirm that no body of Bacon or of his mother is buried there.

Would Francis Bacon take the fall for James? Probably not, if there was not just one more piece against Bacon in James' hand:

¹³ Basil Montagu. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, Vol. I. 1850

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I. p. 112, 1850

It may strongly be believed that Francis Bacon had a reason for never mentioning the Magna Carta (The Great Charter) in his works; no mention is to be found in Spedding's historical volumes on Bacon. However, Sir Edward Coke mentions the Great Charter and quotes extensively upon its laws, in every law book of the time.



Sir Edward Coke
(1552-1634)

Why not Francis Bacon? One logical explanation is that Bacon was forced not believe in the laws of the Great Charter and not, as some biographers wish to offer the public, that Bacon was 'against the people'. Bacon couldn't believe in it, because he didn't abide his law by two serious statements found in the Great Charter. And how could he?

The first statement in the Great Charter is that torture is strictly forbidden. There are no doubts of this if one reads the literature on the Great Charter and its contents. The second statement is that when a person is found guilty he will be executed for that crime under the matter that the law states and after execution, all possessions of the condemned go to the crown.

In order for those Privy Councillors to extract guilt from a prisoner they used torture, which was forbidden; if the prisoner died, whilst being tortured without confessing, the family of the prisoner inherits his estates. If the prisoner confesses whilst being tortured, the family inherit nothing, and all goes to the crown.

Bacon, as a Lord Chancellor, was directed by King James and Buckingham, to extract false guilty confessions from tortured prisoners so these two scoundrels of the time could profit. Letters exist, written between Bacon and Buckingham, where the latter requests from Bacon to 'sell sentences' and this fact was one of the strongest assets that Macaulay put his strength upon, if the latter part of his Essay on Bacon is read.

Since Bacon couldn't get any share from this profit that he was collecting and offering to James and Buckingham (as it is highly unbelievable they were so open handed), Bacon turned to going into debt to sustain his luxury position that was then in custom for a Lord Chancellor to have and show off to the public and

colleagues, and in order to pay his amanuenses (pen-names), and his publication of works, be those his works known to the public, or the Shakespearean plays and sonnets unknown to the public. And probably the hint that set this current investigation in motion is very true, that Bacon was also a gambler.

Either way, Bacon was in a difficult spot. Here he was, writing letters to Buckingham promising or confirming that a sentence was settled as Buckingham requested, leaving himself vulnerable and open to any kind of libel.

Here he was, in desperate need of money to keep (a) his lifestyle and state as Lord Chancellor and (b) his publications going. Such a wit as Bacon it is illogical for him to have allowed his own handwriting offering his judiciary assistance to Buckingham to remain on paper instead of burning them; but he didn't burn them.

It cannot be thought able that Bacon kept those letters, his logic would have told him *Burn Them!* So, what does Buckingham do? He asks Bacon to make two copies of the letters he sends: one in cipher and one in plain English. Buckingham gives Bacon some excuse that Bacon's ciphers can't be read most of the time, and James is having trouble reading the ciphered letters. It should be remembered that there exists a letter (see following) from Bacon to King James in 1609 stating that he writes in cipher to James:

**Letter to the King
February 10, 1609**

But I make no judgment yet, but will go on with all diligence; and, if it may not be done otherwise, it is fit Peacock be put to the torture. He deserveth it as well as Peacham did. I beseech Your Majesty not to think I am more bitter because my name is in it; for, besides that I always make my particular a cypher when there is a question of Your Majesty's honour and service, I think myself honoured by being brought into so good company.

And as, without flattery, I think Your Majesty the best of Kings, and my noble Lord of Buckingham the best of persons favoured, so I hope, without presumption, for my honest and true intentions to State and justice, and my love to my master, I am not the worst of chancellors.

God preserve Your Majesty.

Your Majesty's most obliged and most obedient servant,

Fr. Verulam, Canc.

Feb. 10, 1619.

Buckingham keeps one copy allowing Bacon to think that after James has read it, it was burnt! But it wasn't. And this is the evidence they had as an extra card to set Bacon up on bribery charges in combination with Field's brocade swindles; and, it is quite probable that other such evidence was held in James' hands regarding Bacon's connection with Prince Henry's death and also Overbury's.

Therefore, being forced to confess his guilt, because Buckingham also presented to him the letters he had sent him whenever he requested a case settled to his satisfaction, letters, Bacon thought were already destroyed, brought this man's downfall.

These letters were not collected by Rawley nor were they printed in the *Resuscitatio*; these letters were published by Abbott, Stephens, Montague, Spedding, Nichol, and others. These letters had slipped through the cracks of King James' bed chambers or from Buckingham' vaults and letter chests, and travelled like worms through time to the biographers of the 1700's and 1800's, to haunt Bacon's wounded name to this day.

To conclude, Bacon takes the fall and probably was more implicated with James in this than is given to us to be believed. He is charged, and as law decrees, disgraced from office.

Field is pardoned since he would 'spend his blood for him' [Buckingham], and could mean that Field had some bloody story on Buckingham who would be forced to pardon Field and not have any of those stories leaked, in the same manner as King James pardoned Somerset from guilt regarding the Overbury poisoning.

The above motive also offers reasonable explanation to many confusing letters that Spedding could not explain. It also offers explanation why Bacon had a 'secret interview' with James just before Bacon offered his 'guilt' to the House of Lords; this interview is recollected by Spedding, but without giving any explanation of it.

What do you think?

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"And for the briberies and gifts wherewith I am charged, when the books of hearts shall be opened, I hope I shall not be found to have the troubled fountain of a corrupt heart, in a depraved habit of taking rewards to pervert justice; howsoever I may be frail, and partake of the abuses of the times."

—Francis Bacon in a letter to King James, May 25, 1620